

INTERNATIONAL FEDERATION OF UNIVERSITY WOMEN

FÉDÉRATION INTERNATIONALE DES FEMMES DIPLÔMÉES DES UNIVERSITÉS

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IFUW 28th Triennial Conference: Humanising Globalisation: Empowering Women Perth, Western Australia, 4 August 2004

Opening Address by Professor Reiko Aoki, President International Federation of University Women, 2001 - 2004

Madame President of Australian Federation of University Women,
Madame Marie Taylor, Nyungar Birdiyia Yogka,
Distinguished Guests,
Members of the International Federation of University Women, and
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is our great privilege to have so many honourable guests attending our 28th Triennial Conference in Perth in the State of Western Australia. We have with us today the Honourable Louise Pratt MLC representing the Premier of Western Australia. Although, unfortunately, the Governor of the State of Western Australia was unable to be here, he sent us a warm message that appears in our conference brochure. We have likewise representatives of the Vice Chancellors of Curtin University, Edith Cowan University, Murdoch University and the University of Western Australia. We are also delighted to have with us representatives from the National Council of Women, Guides Australia, Soroptimists International, International Council of Women, Australian Women in Agriculture, Australian Women's Coalition, and National Rural Women's Coalition. Among those Non-governmental organizations, Soroptimists International, International Council of Women, and IFUW form a coalition of Project 5-0 together with other two groups: BPW International and Zonta International. Project 5-0 is a joint project team, helping women's educational training in developing countries, and we celebrate the 25th Anniversary next year.

Now, Ladies and Gentlemen, the International Federation of University Women formally welcomes you all to its 28th Triennial Conference. To those who have had to travel far across seas and continents, I sympathize with you for what was doubtless a long and tiring journey. I hope the crisp air (though a bit wet now) and scenic views of this beautiful city of Perth will help to soothe your travel fatigue. To those who have been busy here in Perth preparing for this Conference for the past three years, I would like to extend on behalf of all IFUW participants our heartfelt thanks for your great work and achievements. You, too, must be exhausted by all the time and energy to plan, arrange, negotiate and settle all the details necessary for the conference. But your labours have been rewarded by the extensive support and cooperation you have won

from local authority, academic institutions, companies and hotels in Perth, especially the Sheraton, which provided for us this wonderful venue.

Our federation meets once in every three years to discuss IFUW's valuable roles, to enliven our capacities, and to confirm our solid principles established by our founding sisters in 1919. We last met in Ottawa, Canada in 2001. Immediately after the conference, the shocking 9-11 attacks horrified people all over the world. Since then, we have witnessed additional terrors, tragedies, wars, countless bomb scares, natural disasters and horrifying deceases like Sars, all of which have threatened us and damaged our lives. Economically, the last few years have not been easy either, and NGOs such as ourselves are feeling increasing financial strains.

The past three years have also brought other amazing changes and developments that have changed our ways of life. Shopping has become easier due to debit cards and the Internet. Thanks to e-mail, communication is now faster and simpler than ever, and we no longer have to take time to go to the post office. Tickets for the theatre or for airline flights, reservations for hotels or restaurants can be easily obtained from home. The Internet allows doctors from advanced hospitals to give medical checks and even emergency care to people in remote areas (in the country where there is no flying doctor) so they no longer need always travel to urban areas. Humanoid robots have been further advanced to serve us by running bedside errands and providing almost human-like care — a development we may all greatly appreciate should we suffer from any physical limitations.

Nobody knows where we are going and to what extent our environment would change in the future. As Alvin Toffler, an American social scientist and author of the best-selling book *Future Shock* warned us in 1970, change is now hurtling toward us at a drastically accelerated pace, and this pace will only grow faster so that someday we might not be able to keep up with it at all.

These changes, however, are often challenging, and they open new gates to the future by bringing us different perspectives and new opportunities. Changes resulting from new technologies deliver convenience and provide access to opportunities. The fact remains, of course, that risks always underlie any change, and unless we are fairly guided not to exploit, and not to be exploited by, the advantages of modern technology, millions of people could end up suffering from the hidden pitfalls of progress. It is the responsibility of modern education to show the way for the use of technology so that it will not cause further disadvantages to the less advantaged.

Nevertheless, we should not be afraid of facing change. When our organization was founded in 1919, only a few able women were admitted into echelons of higher education. A century ago, only in a limited number of countries, women could achieve suffrage. At that time, the female labour force and women profession women constituted a small minority in industry, sales, trades, enterprise, politics, law firms, medicine, academia and elsewhere. Women were rarely assigned to decision-making posts. Our present economic, social and educational environment cannot be compared to what it was a century ago. We should be sensitive to, and flexible to, this change. Otherwise, we will not be able to make ourselves available to the real needs of the society.

In 1919, our federation was but a group of three national affiliates. In 2004, it is a global organization of educated women, comprising 77 national affiliates spread throughout the world. However, while our membership on the basis of national affiliates is growing steadily, individual members belonging to the national affiliate are decreasing. Despite this, the structure of our organization remains almost unchanged. We have to ask ourselves if our structure functions well enough to meet the needs of all affiliates and their members. We have to ask ourselves if we are truly available to the needs of modern society. As most of you know, we are now facing the most critical challenge we have ever experienced in the history of IFUW. We need a sagacity and courage to meet it. Instead of being thrown off course, we must recognize and overcome the difficulties we face. We are not asking at all for a change in our principles or mission. We are asking for a change in our availability. Without extinguishing the flames of our symbolic lamp for enlightenment, we have to survive this chaotic and critical moment to serve for the benefit of society “Equality, development and peace” was a slogan in the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies. The same spirit was alive in Beijing. The mission of IFUW serves a similar purpose. To maintain the dignity of all human beings regardless of race, colour and sex is the fundamental goal of our society and our federation. We, the IFUW members have to work for this goal by using expertise we had achieved through our own education. To return what we had received through our own education is the responsibility of all graduates of higher education, and for that purpose IFUW is working.

Before closing, let me take this opportunity to read a message from the Governor of Hyogo Prefecture in Japan, the prefecture, which has a sister link with the State of Western Australia. Hyogo Prefecture includes the city of Kobe, which was heavily struck by the earthquakes in 1995, the year we met for our 25th Triennial Conference in Yokohama, Japan. It reads as follows:

Greetings from the Governor of Hyogo Prefecture

August 4, 2004

I would like to extend my heartfelt congratulations on the convening of the 28th Conference of the International Federation of University Women in Perth, Western Australia. Since the establishment of the sister relationship in 1981, Western Australia and Hyogo Prefecture have enhanced friendly exchanges in a wide variety of fields. In 2001, our two regions celebrated the 20th anniversary of this history of friendship and cooperation.

Next year will mark the 10th anniversary of the Great Hanshin-Awaji Earthquake, which struck Kobe and other regions of Hyogo Prefecture. During the process of reconstruction from this Earthquake, we received kind and generous support from member countries of IFUW as well as other countries around the world, for which we are very grateful. In disaster-affected areas, “creative reconstruction” is steadily being carried out in order to accommodate for the advancing maturity of society in the 21st century.

Four years have already passed since the new century began. It is often said that the 21st century will become the “Women’s Century.” Our society is experiencing a great change from the phase of growth to the phase of maturity. Women shall play active roles in every corner of society and fulfill their potential, while making full use of the sensitivity and flexibility that are unique to women.

In light of this, I would like to offer my sincerest encouragement to the member of IFUW for their earnest efforts to advance the status of women in society, promote higher education among women, and foster international friendship.

In closing, I would like to extend my very best wishes for the success of the Conference and the further prosperity of IFUW and JAUW, as well as for the continued health and success of all participants.

Toshizo Ido
Governor of Hyogo Prefecture

Our special thanks go to the Governor of Hyogo Prefecture, His Excellency Toshizo Ido.

Now, it is the time for us to have our distinguished guest speaker give the keynote address. Professor Hilary Charlesworth is a Professor and Director of the Centre for International and Public Law at the Australian National University. She is a graduate of the University of Melbourne and Harvard Law School. Having practiced law in Melbourne and New York, she began to teach at the Universities of Melbourne and Adelaide and other universities. She served as the first President of the Australian and New Zealand Society of International Law and had been a part time Commissioner of the Australian Law Reform Commission and Equal Opportunity Commission. She is a member of the Australian Academy of Social Sciences and a member of the Australian Research Council’s College of Experts. For assisting her visit tonight, we are deeply grateful to the University of Western Australia. Now, Ladies and Gentlemen, please welcome Professor Hilary Charlesworth, who is going to speak on “Humanizing Globalization: Empowering Women.”

Closing Remarks:

With such a wonderful and stimulating speech given by Professor Hilary Charlesworth, we are now approaching to the end of our Opening Ceremony. We appreciate the attendance of each and every one of you; and I would like to take this opportunity to thank to Curtin University for their benevolent assistance in the funding of this event. We have a reception now in the Grand River Ballroom, and I would like to invite you all to join us to enjoy the evening. I would appreciate it if you would kindly raise and show our appreciation to our guests of honour leaving the room, and then please follow us immediately to the Ballroom. Thank you.